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Summary ‘Objects in situ, peoples in places. Home, museum and belonging in the cultural landscape of Israel’

This research, the core of which took place from 2005 to 2011, looks for relationships between objects in the homes and museums of Israel, approached here as a nation state as well as a cultural landscape. The main research questions are: to what extent does Israel, as a location of meaning, affect the interplay between objects and people? Is the museum a home for cultures or is material culture in real homes something completely different from museum objects on display? It also investigates the relevance of current museum theory, developed in the context of state formation in nations living in relative peace, for the Israeli context, where, as this research shows, museums seem to be part of a struggle over land. The manuscript consists of four parts: An introduction, Part 1, Part 2, and a conclusion.

The introduction, called ‘Switzerland’, has seven sections. It introduces authors relevant to the research. The first section, ‘Location, location, location’, considers the significance of a specific location in the context of, as well as in relation to, a wider network. The second, ‘Borders of identity’, looks at the question of how geographical and administrative boundaries act as definers of identity. In particular research done by Chris Tilley and Anita Shapira is discussed while looking at the connection between identity and territory. Then ‘Politics of culture’ introduces the museological debate on the role of material culture in the interaction and interdependence between what this research approaches as ‘subcultures’ and an Israeli ‘main culture’.

A hypothesis that Israel’s main culture as embodied in government institutions might more properly be considered another subculture, is introduced.

Research on the formation of society done by Baruch Kimmerling, Roger Brubaker, Benedict Anderson and Birgit Meyer is discussed. The section on ‘Material culture, objects and people’ delineates the different classifications of objects one might need to compare cultural identifications in the public sphere

with the private sphere. Work by authors Robert Young and Daniel Sherman is discussed while looking at the role of culture within society. 'Having, collecting and showing' discusses the possible impact of classifications made by museums on the formation of a nation state. It is argued that location and the way people interact with location in time has a continuous influence on the relation between people and objects. Etienne Balibar, James Clifford and Pieter ter Keurs are some of the authors whose work is part of the argument on the influence of looking outward or inward on the way people act within society. Furthermore, a correlation is suggested between the role museums play in the relation between people and objects and the position people take within the society in which they live. Part of this section on material culture and museums is research done by Daniel Miller and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. To have a closer look at the role of museums within society, work by authors Sharon MacDonald, Susan Legêne and Paul Gilroy is discussed. Finally, 'Tacheles' outlines the historical approach, as well as the sociological methods and the anthropological tools used in this research. In particular, the method of qualitative research work by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss is discussed. Selma Leydesdorff's studies on oral history are considered, while looking to Hanna Herzog for insight on the connection between location and interview. Studies by Elizabeth Edwards on the use of photographs as historical sources are discussed. The ideas of Kwame Anthony Appiah on thick translation are introduced. The introduction concludes with 'Time in place', showing a map that visualizes the links between times and places relevant for the research.

Part 1 'Objects in situ: Homes and their museums' consists of eight chapters each of which discusses a 'unit of analysis' comprising of a home and a museum linked to one of the following subcultures, Chabad, Moroccan, Iraqi, Ethiopian, Russian, Religious Zionist, Israeli Christian Arab and Israeli Muslim Arab. As each subculture has its own field of interest, scholars from different fields and disciplines will be discussed in each chapter.

Chapter one, 'Exhibiting belief: religious objects in a secular institute', through the home of Mrs Marantz in Kfar Chabad and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem focuses on the Chabad subculture. Using phenomenological and narrative approaches, the chapter concentrates on the material culture of Chabad, both the tangible and the intangible religious objects and material used for missionary purposes. The chapter looks at how the Israel Museum, a secular institution, has to adjust its ways of operating to the specific character of the material when it exhibits religious objects.

Chapter two, 'More than one story to tell, photographs at home and in the museum', through the home of Mrs Sapir Bergstein in Tel Aviv and Beit Hatfutsot, the Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv researches the Moroccan subculture. Unlike ritual objects, the phenomenological value of photographs is often self-evident, therefore the chapter focuses on how, when a museum incorporates the narrative approach in the process of collecting and presenting photographs, they can be chosen and presented as social objects with their specific features, and whether by so doing the story told in private and in public could be linked.

Chapter three, 'A migration museum and its visitors', through the home of Mrs Kaduri in Ramat Gan and the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center in Or Yehuda looks at the Iraqi subculture. In this chapter the Western world is absent. The history is located in Baghdad, Palestine and later in Israel. The chapter addresses the question of what role the intangible aspects of the Iraqi material culture play, not only in terms of presentation but also in terms of participation. The chapter focuses also on the question of how museum practices influence the way second, third and fourth generations present themselves and are being perceived by others within Israeli society.

Chapter four, 'Indigenous curation provides a second view', through the home of Mr Yeshayahu in Afula and Bahalachin, the Ethiopian Jews Cultural Center in Tel Aviv focuses on the Ethiopian subculture. The journey from

Ethiopia through Sudan to Israel plays a significant role in this story in which again, the Western world is absent. The chapter reflects on the kind of material culture found in homes of different generations of immigrants and the role presenting material culture in a museum can play in the process of assimilation and acceptance of the Ethiopian immigrants in Israel.

Chapter five, 'Medals rather than high art' through the home of Mr Pens in Haifa and the Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II in Latrun focuses on the Russian subculture. This chapter looks at how the Russian subculture is in the process of making its unique history not only part of the collective history of Israel but of the Jewish people in general.

Chapter six, 'On colors and borders, Religious Zionists', through the home of Mrs Romem in Kibutz Levi and the People of Israel website focuses on the Religious Zionist subculture. This chapter examines how material culture expresses the specific set of characteristics of the Religious Zionist subculture, and to what extent this material culture crosses the borders of the subculture and is presented to the rest of the society.

Chapter seven, 'A holiday as object', through the home of Mrs Salame in Turan and Beit HaGefen in Haifa examines the Israeli Christian Arab subculture. This chapter looks at to what extent material culture is an expression of assimilation, conviviality and /or exclusion.

Chapter eight, 'The geographical position of art and home', through the home of Mrs Abu Ilaw and the Umm el Fahem Art Gallery focuses on the Israeli Muslim Arab subculture. This chapter looks into the design of the museum, as being in itself a statement about the place. Unlike the land, histories, both oral and visual, have to be claimed. They form a narrative that, for this subculture, has not found its place next to the existing narratives in Israel. At the same time the chapter calls attention to the effect the direction

of focus of the subculture itself, outward looking or inward looking, has on the material culture at home and in the museum.

Together, out of the objects discussed in the eight chapters of Part 1 a virtual collection of 66 objects emerges that is unique in that it combines objects from the two spheres, the private and the public, and with different inward or outward looking foci. The collection is instrumental for the comparison of objects in homes and in museums as well as for the comparison of different kinds of museums in Israel (re)presenting different subcultures.

Part 2 'Belonging: Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion', which consists of two chapters, compares the findings of Part 1 on two levels. Chapter nine, 'On snapshots and masterpieces' compares between units of analysis as well as between homes and museums, to better understand the shaping of the Israeli nation state and its identity. In order to be able to compare the objects together with their biographies, three specific categories have been developed, that cover the use, function and social life of the object. These are 'Collective and Personal History', 'Religious and Ritual Experience' and 'Art'. Using bar graphs the 66 objects collected during the research as described in Part 1, are classified and analyzed. The chapter opens with an overview of each object, including an image, the category and the subculture that the object is linked to.

Chapter ten, 'Establishing collections, building a nation' focuses on the links between a specific subculture (religious, ethnic or political) and the kind of museum that (re)presents it in Israeli society today. As in chapter 9, location plays an essential role, meaning the location of objects, the location of people and the location of the country. In linking the objects found in homes and museums the connection between the three locations becomes visible. Like an object, and perhaps even more visible, a museum is an expression and a mechanism of belonging or exclusion. The chapter positions the museums

discussed in the previous chapters in a historical sketch of the museum landscape in Israel, including institutions like the Knesset and other public places connected to the main culture. The chapter demonstrates the role Israeli politics play in the process of establishing museums as part of building the nation state, and shows that the main culture seems to act like a subculture.

Finally, in 'To conclude, Switzerland once more', the research shows that the way objects and museums are used in Israel is in essence not atypical compared to developments in other countries. However including location when analyzing the way objects and museums are used in the forming of a nation state considerably changes the meaning of the objects and of the museums, thus making location the predominant factor in the analysis. Israeli museums have gone through significant developments in recent decades. The most telling change is the emphasis museums put on modern and contemporary art as a way to be neutral, apolitical, in order to reach the whole of society and by so doing to be a tool for dialogue within society. Art however is never neutral nor does it have an affect of unity in Israel. While collecting and presenting art, the link to other categories, such as ethnography and religion, is often overlooked. When objects are collected without the accompanying stories, the idea of a museum as a vehicle for dialogue with other groups is too optimistic for Israel. This is particularly the case because the link between the home and the museum will be missing. As a consequence it seems that subcultures are turning to memorials to take on the task as a vehicle for dialogue. The role that remains for objects and museums is to tell stories about the connection between the objects and people and places, while acknowledging that they change over time. That way people will feel connected to their own story, which is one step away from being willing to listen to another person's story. However, as long as the location itself is disputed and looked at differently by almost every subculture, it will be difficult to find a space in which to convey the stories of the objects that matter.